

SLW inspects Children's Residential Home (with photos)

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, inspected the Children's Residential Home (CRH) of the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children (HKSPC) this afternoon (August 12) to take a closer look at the progress of its revamp project and the conditions of children under residential care. The Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Ms Alice Lau, also joined the visit.

Mr Sun was first briefed by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the HKSPC, Mr Robin Hammond, and the Superintendent of the CRH, Ms Loretta Cheung, on the implementation progress of a series of improvement measures recommended by the Independent Review Committee appointed by the HKSPC. Mr Sun looked into the progress of its revamp project in collaboration with the Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education, including the effectiveness of enhanced management, strengthened training and an expanded manning ratio. He then visited the CRH's facilities and chatted with children under residential care and frontline personnel respectively.

Since the CRH incident, the Government has taken immediate enhancement measures in some of the prevailing residential child care services, including requiring all Residential Child Care Centres (RCCCs) to install closed-circuit television monitoring systems and formulating policies and mechanisms for proactive monitoring and reviewing of footage; incorporating former law enforcement agency staff and health inspectors into multi-disciplinary inspection teams; and requesting tertiary institutions providing relevant courses to incorporate elements of child protection into their curriculums.

Mr Sun said, "The CRH incident was distressing. Stringent follow-up action must be taken to learn from this painful lesson and ensure the implementation of improvement measures in every aspect of the HKSPC is effective, in place and sustainable, in order to achieve its mission on children protection. The Committee on Review of Residential Child Care and Related Services chaired by the Director of Social Welfare has substantially completed its review on RCCC services and the first-phase review report is expected to be completed within this month. The second phase of the review will cover other related child care services, with the aim of completion by March next year."

The Labour and Welfare Bureau has taken forward the legislation on a mandatory reporting mechanism of child abuse cases and will consult stakeholders on its implementation details in due course, with the target of introducing a bill into the Legislative Council in the first half of next year. The Social Welfare Department is also planning appropriate training for practitioners in the relevant professions with a view to enhancing their capacity for early identification and handling of child abuse cases.

